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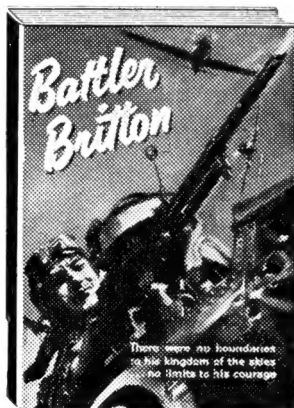
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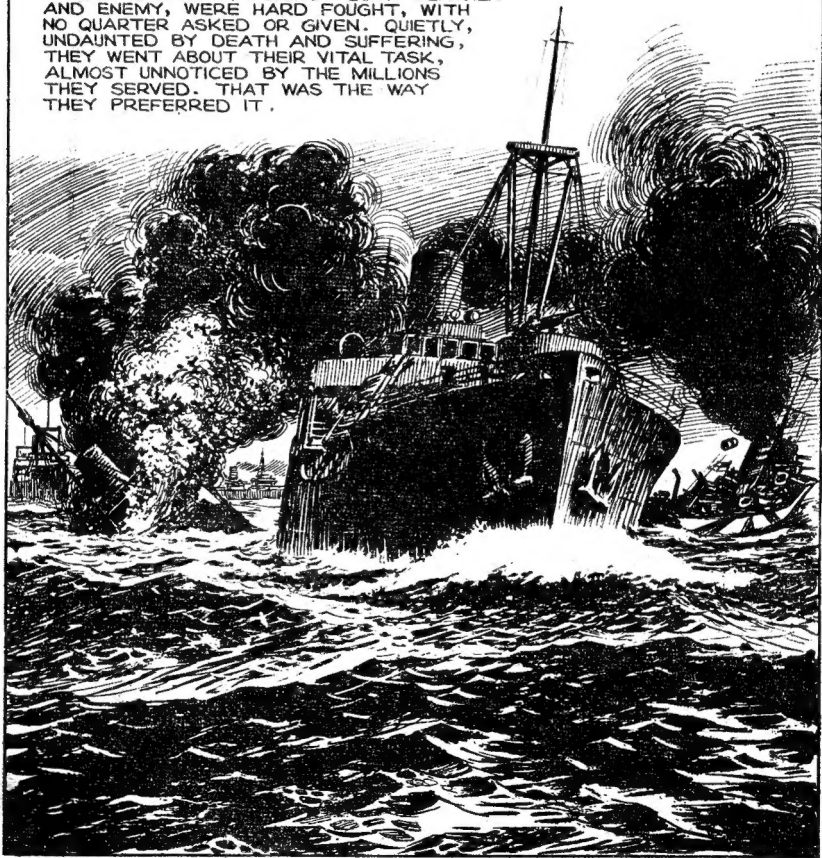
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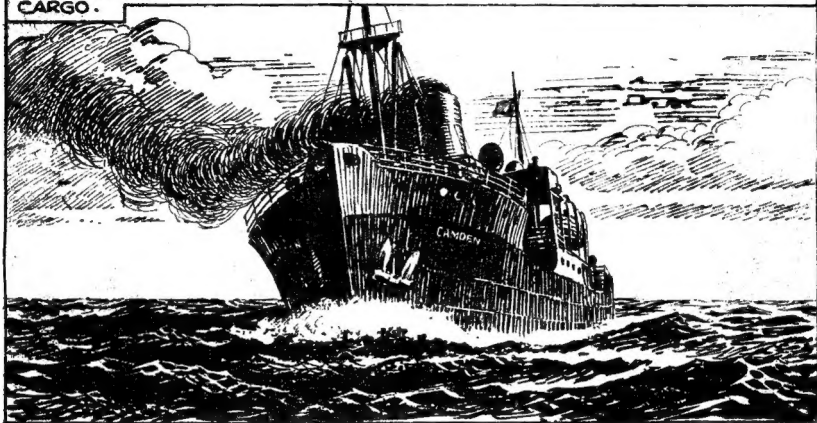
# *THOSE IN PERIL*

UNSUNG HEROES OF THE SEA, THE MEN OF THE MERCHANT NAVY CARRIED THE RED ENSIGN TO EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE. BATTLES, AGAINST BOTH WEATHER AND ENEMY, WERE HARD FOUGHT, WITH NO QUARTER ASKED OR GIVEN. QUIETLY, UNDAUNTED BY DEATH AND SUFFERING, THEY WENT ABOUT THEIR VITAL TASK, ALMOST UNNOTICED BY THE MILLIONS THEY SERVED. THAT WAS THE WAY THEY PREFERRED IT.



## Chapter 1. WITHOUT MERCY

SEPTEMBER 3RD., 1939 - ON THAT FATEFUL SUNDAY MORNING, WAR WAS DECLARED BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY. AND ON THAT DAY, TOO, THE TRAMP STEAMER S.S. *CAMDEN* WAS FAR OUT IN THE WESTERN ATLANTIC, HOMEWARD BOUND FROM BRAZIL WITH A MIXED CARGO.



ABOARD HER THERE WAS ONLY ONE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION. AND FOR DAVE KENDALL, THE SHIP'S THIRD OFFICER, THERE WAS ONLY ONE COURSE OF ACTION -- TO JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY LIKE HIS BROTHER, ALEC, WHO WAS ALREADY A FLEET AIR-ARM FIGHTER PILOT.

SO IT'S COME AT LAST! WELL, WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING IT FOR LONG ENOUGH. IT WILL MEAN GOODBYE TO MOST OF THE *CAMDEN*'S CREW, THOUGH -- THE YOUNG 'UNS WILL BE LINING UP TO GET INTO THE FIGHTING IF I KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT 'EM.

WHAT'LL IT BE FOR YOU, DAVE? THE NAVY, LIKE YOUR BROTHER, I SUPPOSE?



AYE, THAT'S RIGHT. AND THE SOONER THE BETTER.

BUT FOR THE S.S. CAMDEN AND HER CREW, WAR WAS NOT SO VERY FAR AWAY. A FEW SHORT HOURS LATER, KEEN EYES ON THE BRIDGE OF A SLEEK GREY WARSHIP STUDIED THE DISTANT WALLOWING TRAMP.



ABOARD THE BRITISH VESSEL, THE WARSHIP HAD BEEN RECOGNISED WITH DISMAY... SHE WAS GERMAN!





Those In Peril

CAPTAIN DAVIES STEPPED ACROSS TO THE SPEAKING TUBE CONNECTING THE BRIDGE WITH THE WHEELHOUSE.

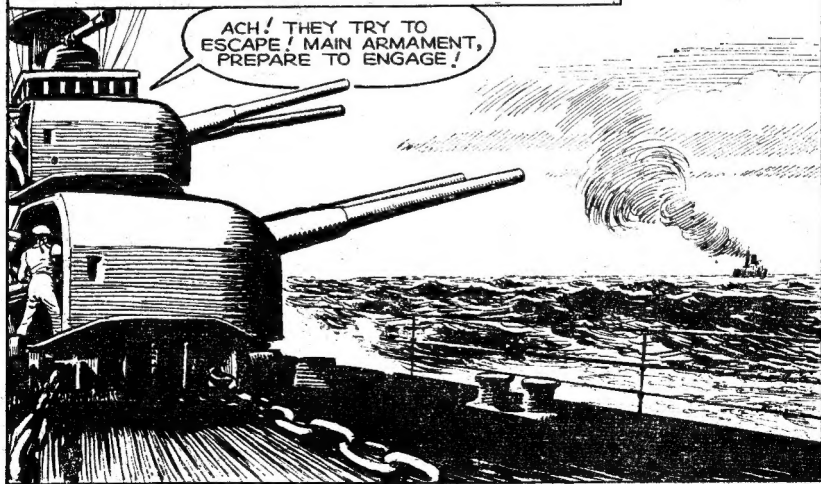
...HELMSMAN, STEER PORT TEN DEGREES!  
ENGINE ROOM, FULL AHEAD BOTH!

WE'LL NEVER  
OUTDISTANCE  
HER!

MAYBE NOT, MISTER MATE. BUT IT  
WILL BE DARK IN HALF AN HOUR ~  
IF WE CAN KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE  
TILL THEN, WE MAY BE ABLE TO LOSE  
HER. TELL SPARKS TO SEND OUT A  
MESSAGE GIVING OUR POSITION.

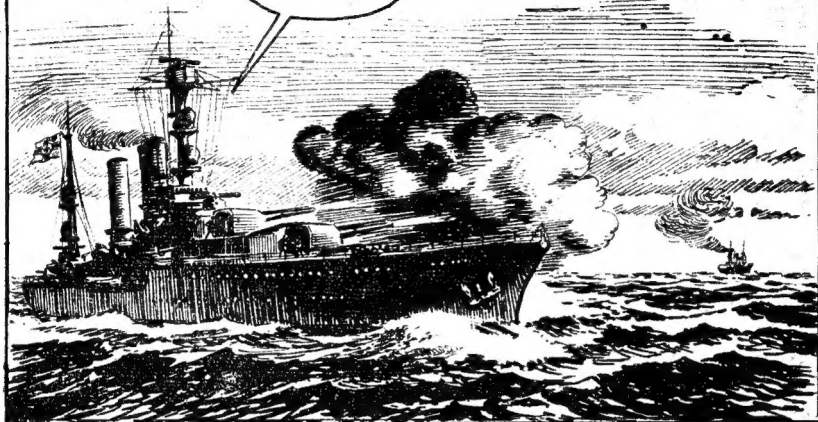
THE GERMAN COMMANDER'S EYES GLITTERED ANGRILY AS HE SAW THE BRITISH SHIP SWING AWAY.

ACH! THEY TRY TO  
ESCAPE! MAIN ARMAMENT,  
PREPARE TO ENGAGE!



THE LONG BARRELS OF THE CRUISER'S SIX-INCH GUNS SWUNG MENACINGLY ...

**FIRE!**



THE AIR VIBRATED TO THE SCREAM OF SHELLS AND THE *CAMDEN* SHUDDERED AS THE SEA ERUPTED BESIDE HER. THE OFFICERS CLUTCHED AT THE SIDE OF THE BRIDGE, ALMOST DEAFENED BY THE CONCUSSION.

BEGGIN' YOUR PARDON, SIR, BUT DO YOU THINK WE'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING? WE'VE THIRTY MEN ABOARD AND THAT CRUISER'LL BLOW US ALL SKY HIGH IF WE DON'T GIVE IN.

AND IF WE DO -- IT WILL MEAN A PRISON CAMP FOR THE REST OF THE WAR. I'D SOONER GO UNDER THAN THAT!



I THINK DAVE'S RIGHT, SIR. THE REST OF THE MEN WOULD RATHER TAKE A CHANCE THAN SHOW THE WHITE FLAG.

THE MATE'S QUIETLY SPOKEN WORDS DECIDED THE MATTER AND THE *CAMDEN* FORGED ON THROUGH A WELTER OF SEETHING, SHELL-TORN WATER, CHANGING COURSE AND SPEED CONTINUALLY IN AN EFFORT TO SPOIL THE GERMAN GUN-LAYERS' AIM.



IT WAS A VAIN HOPE. THE SUN WAS SINKING -- BUT NOT FAST ENOUGH TO SAVE THE *CAMDEN*. THERE WAS A SUDDEN SEARING FLASH, AND A SHATTERING EXPLOSION HURLED THE SHIP ALMOST ON TO HER BEAM-ENDS.





AS THE SMOKE DRIFTED AWAY, REVEALING THE GAPING HOLE IN THE SHIP'S SIDE, IT BECAME OBVIOUS TO ALL ABOARD THAT THE STUBBORN OLD TRAMP WAS DOOMED.



WATER'S  
POURING INTO  
THE FOR'ARD  
HOLDS, SIR!

INTO THE BOATS,  
EVERYBODY ....  
ABANDON SHIP!

DAVE!  
WHAT'S  
WRONG?

MY LEG!  
A SPLINTER  
GOT ME IN  
THE LEG!



BUT THE GERMAN CAPTAIN WAS NOT YET SATISFIED WITH HIS WORK OF DESTRUCTION.

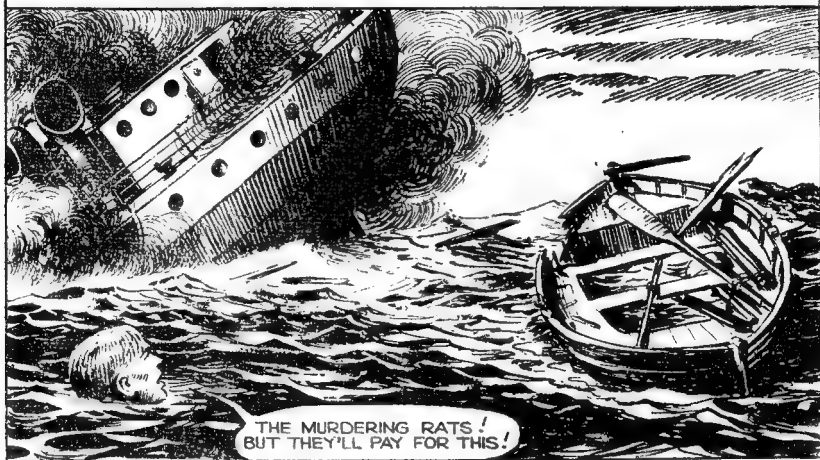
ONE MORE SALVO  
WILL FINISH HER,  
I THINK.



MORE SHELLS SCREAMED DOWN ON THE STRICKEN *CAMDEN*. SHE HEAVED CONVULSIVELY TO A GIGANTIC DOUBLE EXPLOSION, AND DAVE FELT HIMSELF HURLING THROUGH SPACE ...



THE SEA CLOSED OVER HIM AND WHEN HE SURFACED A MOMENT LATER, HIS HEAD STILL RINGING FROM THE STUNNING FORCE OF THE BLOW, IT WAS TO FIND HIMSELF ALONE IN A SEA STREWN WITH WRECKAGE.



GRITTING HIS TEETH, DAVE FOUGHT HIS WAY TOWARDS A BATTERED AND HALF SWAMPED LIFEBOAT. AND OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYE HE GLIMPSED TWO SINISTER BLACK FINS CIRCLING LESS THAN A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY.



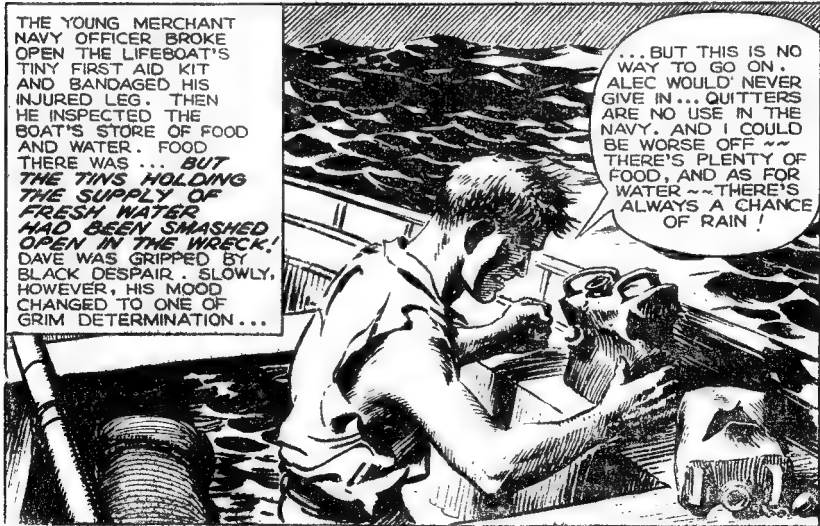
WITH A SPEED BORN OF DESPERATION HE COVERED THE LAST FEW YARDS TO THE BOAT. AND ALL THE TIME THE SHARKS, DRAWN BY THE SCENT OF BLOOD IN THE WATER, CIRCLED CLOSER.



WHEN DAVE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS IT WAS TO FIND THAT DARKNESS HAD FALLEN. THE SEA AROUND HIM WAS EMPTY.



THE YOUNG MERCHANT NAVY OFFICER BROKE OPEN THE LIFEBOAT'S TINY FIRST AID KIT AND BANDAGED HIS INJURED LEG. THEN HE INSPECTED THE BOAT'S STORE OF FOOD AND WATER. FOOD THERE WAS ... BUT THE TINS HOLDING THE SUPPLY OF FRESH WATER HAD BEEN SMASHED OPEN IN THE WRECK! DAVE WAS GRIPPED BY BLACK DESPAIR. SLOWLY, HOWEVER, HIS MOOD CHANGED TO ONE OF GRIM DETERMINATION...



DAVE COCKED A HOPEFUL EYE AT THE HEAVENS, BUT THE STARS WINKED MOCKINGLY BACK AT HIM. THE DAWN BROUGHT NO PROMISE OF RAIN FOR SOME TIME TO COME, AND HE TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO MAKING THE SHATTERED LIFEBOAT MORE COMFORTABLE.

THERE, THAT PLATFORM SHOULD KEEP ME ABOVE WATER LEVEL, PROVIDED THE OLD BOAT DOESN'T SETTLE ANY DEEPER -- SHE'S LEAKING LIKE A SIEVE! GOOD THING SHE'S GOT BUOYANCY TANKS!



THAT DAY PASSED -- AND THE NEXT, AND HOUR BY HOUR DAVE GREW WEAKER. EVEN THE NIGHT WAS HOT AND HE COULD GET NO REST. THEN, TOWARDS DAWN OF ANOTHER DAY ...



SEAS GETTING UP, AND -- BY GLORY! THAT'S LIGHTNING OVER THERE! WIND'S COMING FROM THAT DIRECTION, TOO. IF ONLY IT HOLDS FOR ANOTHER HOUR OR SO!



WITHIN THE HOUR THE WATERLOGGED BOAT WAS BEING TOSSED IN THE MIDST OF A VIOLENT TROPICAL STORM. DAVE, HIS HANDS OUTSTRETCHED, CAUGHT THE RAIN AS IT FELL AND ALLOWED IT TO TRICKLE DOWN HIS PARCHED, ACHING THROAT.



HIS TERRIBLE THIRST QUENCHED, DAVE FEVERISHLY CAUGHT THE RAIN IN AN EMPTY RATION TIN. IT WOULD GIVE HIM SEVERAL MORE DAYS OF LIFE. THE STORM, HOWEVER, SEEMED TO HAVE BROUGHT WITH IT A CHANGE OF LUCK, FOR ON THE MORNING OF DAVE'S SIXTH DAY ALONE IN THE BOAT...



I WISH THOSE SHARKS WOULD CLEAR OFF -- THEY GIVE ME THE CREEPS, CIRCLING ROUND LIKE THAT-- FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE, SMOKE! THAT'S SMOKE ON THE HORIZON!

THE CROAKING CHEER WHICH ESCAPED DAVE'S CRACKED AND BLEEDING LIPS DIED AS HE REALISED THAT THE SHIP COULD NOT POSSIBLY SEE HIM FROM HER POSITION HULL DOWN ON THE HORIZON. BUT SHE WAS DRAWING STEADILY NEARER.

I'VE GOT TO ATTRACT HER ATTENTION -- AH! THIS MAY DO THE TRICK!




SOMEHOW DAVE SCRAMBLED UP, HIS LEG SHAKING UNDER HIM AS HE RAISED THE TIN HIGH OVERHEAD TO CATCH THE SUN'S RAYS. AND ABOARD THE SLIM, GREY DESTROYER, PART OF A SMALL BRITISH FORCE WHICH HAD INTERCEPTED THE *CAMDEN*'S LAST RADIO MESSAGE, A STRIDENT YELL ECHOED FROM A VIGILANT LOOKOUT ...



AT ONCE THE WARSHIP PUT HER HELM OVER, WHILE HER CAPTAIN'S FACE SET IN GRIM LINES...



AND HALF AN HOUR LATER...



STEADY  
DOES IT!  
CAREFUL WITH  
THAT LEG!

DOWN IN THE DESTROYER'S SICK BAY, WHEN THE MEDICAL OFFICER HAD FINISHED DRESSING THE WOUND IN HIS LEG, DAVE QUESTIONED HIM ANXIOUSLY.

HOW IS IT, DOC?  
WILL IT AFFECT  
MY CHANCES OF  
JOINING THE  
NAVY?

WE-ELL,--SIX DAYS OF  
EXPOSURE HAVEN'T DONE IT  
ANY GOOD. THE WOUND  
SHOULD HEAL WELL ENOUGH,  
BUT AS FOR THE NAVY--I'M--  
I'M SORRY, LAD, BUT I RECKON  
YOU CAN FORGET IT. YOU'LL  
BE LEFT WITH A PERMANENT  
LIMP, AND THEY WON'T  
PASS YOU FOR THE FIGHTING  
SERVICES LIKE THAT.



## Chapter 2. ARCTIC CONVOY

THAT MOMENT, AND THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, WERE BITTER FOR THE YOUNG MERCHANT NAVY OFFICER. THE THREE FIGHTING SERVICES TURNED HIM DOWN AND, DEJECTEDLY, HE PASSED THE NEWS ON TO HIS BROTHER ...

SO THAT'S IT, ALEC. I'LL HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE MERCHANT SERVICE -- AND THAT MEANS I'M OUT OF THE WAR ALMOST BEFORE IT'S STARTED.

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT. THIS WAR'S GOING TO LAST A LONG TIME, DAVE, AND WHETHER THIS COUNTRY STANDS OR FALLS WILL DEPEND AS MUCH ON THE MERCHANT NAVY AS ON THE FIGHTING SERVICES. YOU'LL GET YOUR SHARE OF ACTION, NEVER FEAR!



BUT DAVE WAS STILL DEPRESSED WHEN HIS NEW SHIP SAILED WITH A WESTWARD-BOUND CONVOY. TED WESTON, THE SHIP'S ELDERLY CHIEF OFFICER, WAS ON THE SPRAY-LASHED BRIDGE ...



LOOKS AS THOUGH WE'RE IN FOR A ROUGH TRIP, TED.

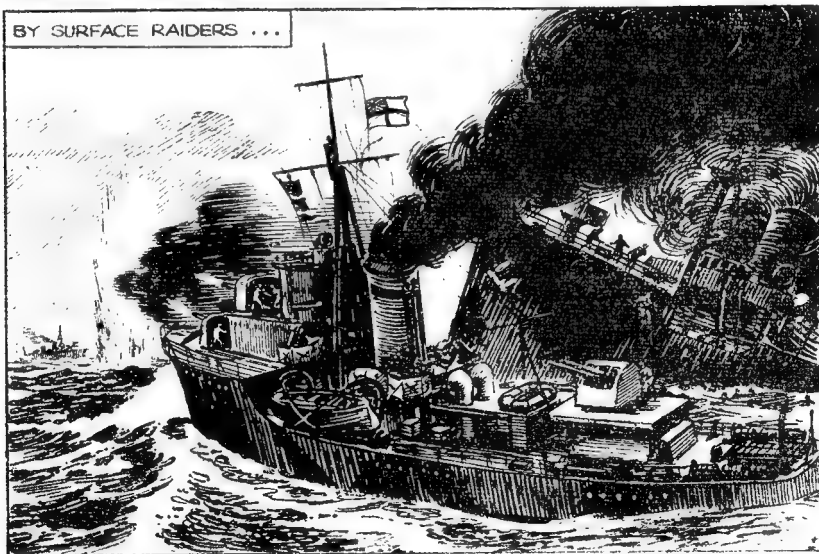
AYE, BUT IT'S ONLY TO BE EXPECTED AT THIS TIME OF YEAR. RECKON YOUR LEG WILL STAND UP TO IT?

YES, IT'LL BE OKAY. THE DOCTORS GAVE ME A CLEAN SHEET -- FOR THE MERCHANT NAVY, THAT IS!

HOWEVER, DAVE'S DISAPPOINTMENT AT BEING BARRED FROM THE ROYAL NAVY WAS SOON FORGOTTEN IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED. FOR STORMS, FOG AND ICE WERE NOT THE ONLY HAZARDS FACED BY MERCHANTMEN ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC ROUTE. ADDED TO THESE AGE-OLD ENEMIES WAS THE NEW DANGER OF ATTACK BY LONG-RANGE BOMBER AIRCRAFT...

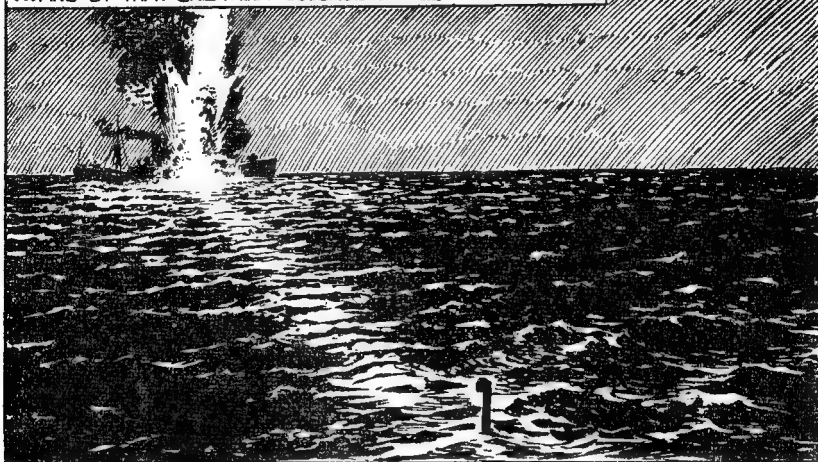


BY SURFACE RAIDERS ...





...AND BY THAT GREATEST SCOURGE OF ALL -- THE U-BOAT !



FOR TWO LONG YEARS DAVE SAILED ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC ROUTE, AND DURING THAT TIME LUCK WENT WITH HIM. VESSELS SAILING ALONGSIDE WERE SENT DOWN BY TORPEDO, BOMB AND SHELL, BUT EACH TIME DAVE'S SHIP CAME THROUGH UNSCATHED -- UNTIL, AT LAST, SHE WAS DAMAGED BY A MINE ONLY A FEW MILES OFFSHORE. EVEN THEN SHE MADE PORT WITH CARGO AND CREW INTACT, BUT SHE WAS PUT OUT OF COMMISSION. DAVE, WHO HAD BEEN PROMOTED TO SECOND OFFICER, WAS DIRECTED TO ANOTHER SHIP, THE S.S. TORVILLE...

WHY, TED ! OF ALL THE LUCK ! I NEVER EXPECTED TO GET A BERTH ON THE SAME SHIP AS YOU. BUT -- FOR PETE'S SAKE ! WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO HER ? SHE LOOKS AS THOUGH SHE'S GOING ON A POLAR EXPEDITION !



SO SHE IS, DAVE -- OR SOMETHING LIKE IT. THAT'S WHY WE'VE ALL BEEN SPECIALLY KITTED OUT -- THE RUSSIAN ROUTE IN WINTER IS PRETTY ROUGH GOING, BELIEVE ME !

TED WESTON'S WORDS PROVED ONLY TOO TRUE. FOR DAYS THE MUNITIONS CONVOY PLOUGHED NORTHWARDS INTO BITING GALES AND STORMS OF SLEET AND SNOW.

PHIEW -- BUT IT'S COLD! WHO'D BE A SAILOR ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS?

IT'S A TRUE SAYING, DAVE -- BUT ONCE A SAILOR, ALWAYS A SAILOR! THERE'S NO OTHER LIFE QUITE LIKE IT!



AS THEY MOVED NORTH INTO THE ARCTIC CIRCLE, THE COLD GREW STEADILY WORSE. SPRAY AND SNOW FROZE SOLID ON THE DECKS AND SUPER-STRUCTURE, ADDING MANY TONS TO THE WEIGHT OF THE SHIP DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF HER CREW TO CLEAR IT. AND THEN, AT THE START OF ANOTHER BRIEF WINTER'S DAY...

SMOKE! SMOKE! ON THE PORT BEAM!

LOOKS LIKE DESTROYERS -- HALF A DOZEN OF THEM!

OUR ESCORT'S IN FOR A LIVELY FEW HOURS!



FOUR DESTROYERS OF THE ESCORT WHEELED AWAY IN A FLURRY OF FOAM, AND IN THE SAME MOMENT A SIGNAL LAMP WINKED FROM THE COMMODORE'S SHIP...



CAPTAIN CLARKE WAS RIGHT, OF COURSE, BUT THE DISTANT THUNDER OF GUNS ECHOING ACROSS THE ICE-STREWN SEA MADE DAVE FEEL AGAIN THE HELPLESSNESS OF BEING UNABLE TO HIT BACK -- OF HAVING TO SEEK SAFETY WHILE OTHERS -- MEN LIKE HIS BROTHER -- DID THE FIGHTING. HE GLANCED BACK, AND A WAVE OF HORROR SHOOK HIM ...



SLOWLY THE STRICKEN WARSHIP HEELED OVER, HER FORWARD GUNS STILL FIRING VALIANTLY.

CALM DOWN, DAVE. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.

BUT THE CREW OF THAT SHIP! THEY CAN'T HOPE TO GET THE BOATS AWAY— AND NO MAN CAN LIVE LONG ON A RAFT IN THESE SEAS!

THE LAD'S RIGHT! WE CAN'T LEAVE THOSE MEN TO DIE!

TO TURN BACK WAS AGAINST ALL ORDERS. BUT EVEN THE CAUTIOUS TED WESTON HAD TO ADMIT THAT IT WOULD BE NOTHING SHORT OF INHUMAN TO LEAVE MEN STRUGGLING IN THE GRIP OF THAT FREEZING, ICE-BOUND SEA!

AYE, YOU'RE RIGHT! THE OTHER DESTROYERS CAN'T HELP THEM. THEY'VE ALREADY GOT THEIR HANDS FULL!

HARD A-PORT! FULL AHEAD!



THE THUNDER OF GUNS DREW NEARER AS THE *TORVILLE* SWUNG ABOUT, AND SOON SHELLS BEGAN TO SCREAM ROUND HER. BUT NOT FOR LONG, AS DAVE LIMPED AFT TO THEIR OWN FOUR-INCH GUN, THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE BEGAN TO RECEDE.



GOOD OLD NAVY! THEY'RE DRAWING OFF THE JERRIES!

LET'S HOPE THEY CAN HOLD THEM— AT LEAST UNTIL WE'VE PICKED UP THOSE MEN.

AT LAST THE STRICKEN DESTROYER'S GUNS FELL SILENT. BUT AS THE TRAMP STEAMER LAY STOPPED AMONG HER SWIMMING CREW...



LOWER THAT SCRAMBLE NET— AND LOOK SHARP ABOUT IT!

AYE, AYE, SIR!

DESTROYER APPROACHING, STARBOARD QUARTER! IT'S A JERRY, SIR!




EVEN AS THE LOOKOUT'S SHOUT RANG ACROSS THE *TORVILLE'S* ICE-ENCRUSTED DECKS, HER LITTLE FOUR-INCH GUN WAS SWINGING INTO LINE ...



THE BARK OF DAVE'S GUN WAS DROWNED BY THE SCREAMING WHINE OF SHELLS FROM THE GERMAN DESTROYER, AND THE TRAMP STAGGERED AS A SALVO BURST CLOSE IN FRONT OF HER.

HARD A-STARBOARD, HELMSMAN! WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM THOSE MEN IN THE WATER. WE'RE DRAWING SHELLS ON TO THEM.



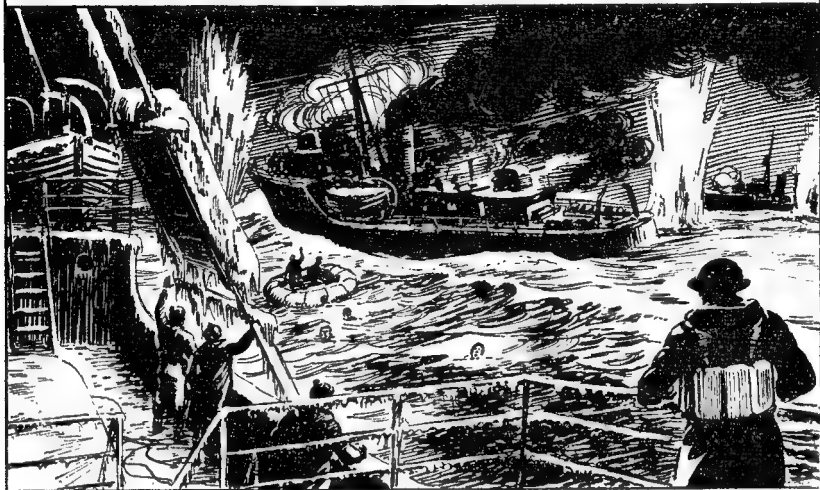
THE TORVILLE'S PLIGHT HAD NOT GONE UNNOTICED, HOWEVER ...

WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?



HARD A-STARBOARD, COX'N! THAT JERRY MUST HAVE DOUBLED BACK WHILE WE WERE BUSY WITH THE OTHERS. HE'LL BLOW THAT MERCHANTMAN OUT OF THE WATER IF WE DON'T STOP HIM!

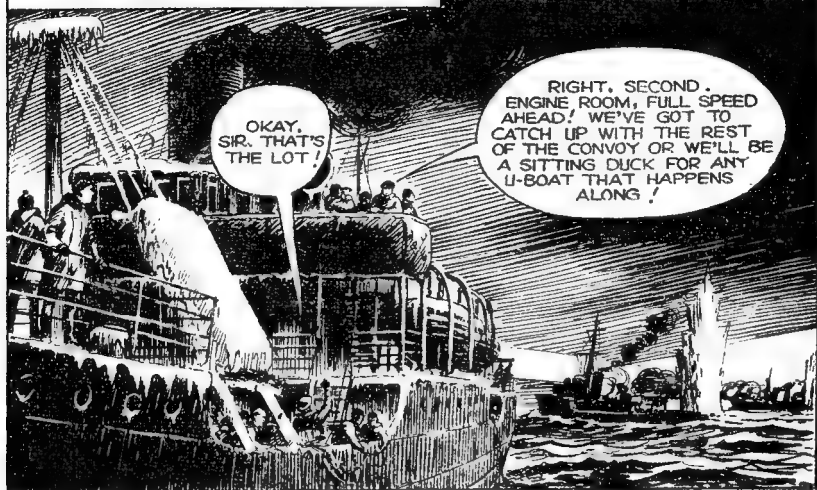
GUNS SPITTING, THE SLIM, GREY DESTROYER KNIFED BETWEEN THE ENEMY WARSHIP AND ITS INTENDED VICTIM. A SIGH OF RELIEF SWEEPED THROUGH THE TORVILLE AND A SUBDUED CHEER WENT UP FROM HER CREW.



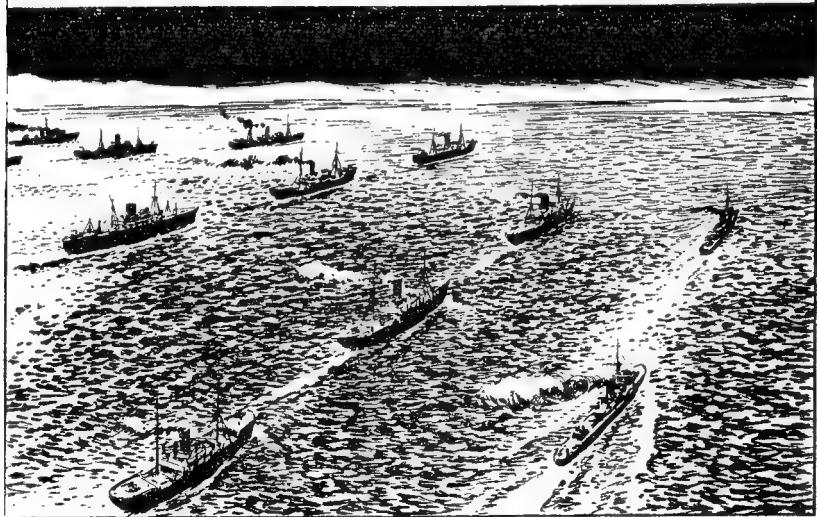
THE ENGINE ROOM TELEGRAPH CLANGED AND THE TRAMP STEAMER RETURNED TO HER GRIM TASK OF AIDING THE PITIFUL HANDFUL OF MEN WHO STILL REMAINED, CLINGING TO THE RAFTS.



THE LAST SURVIVOR WAS LIFTED ABOARD.



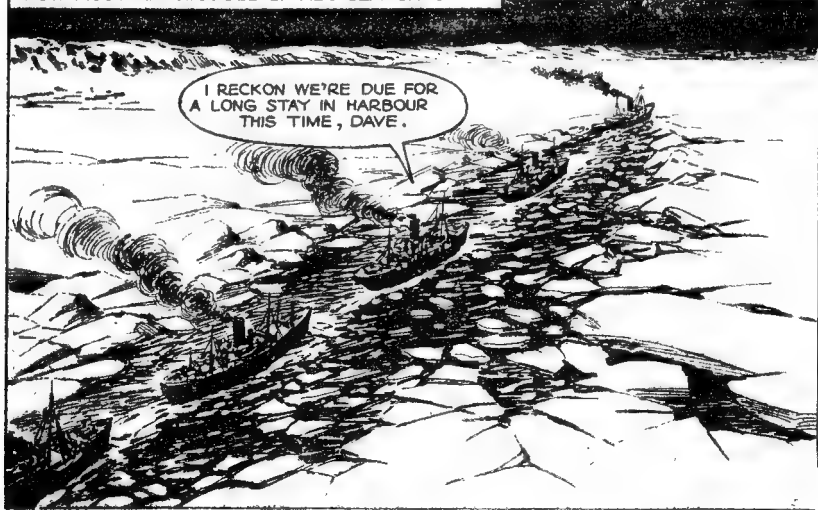
FORTUNE CONTINUED TO SMILE ON THE *TORVILLE*, HOWEVER. SHE REJOINED THE CONVOY WITHOUT INCIDENT, AND THE REST OF THE VOYAGE TO THE PACK ICE IN THE STRAIT OF GORLO PROVED COMPARATIVELY UNEVENTFUL.



FROM THAT POINT ONWARDS, ALL DANGER OF ATTACK BY U-BOATS AND SURFACE RAIDERS CEASED, AND DUTIES ABOARD THE *TORVILLE* RESOLVED INTO THE BLEAK ROUTINE OF CLEARING ICE AND KEEPING CLOSED UP TO THE ICE-BREAKER.



YARD BY YARD, BENEATH THE FLICKERING GLOW OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS, THE SHIPS MOVED ON ALONG THE LANE OF OPEN WATER IN THE ICE-BREAKER'S WAKE-- UNTIL AT LAST THEY CAME WITHIN SIGHT OF THEIR DESTINATION-- ARCHANGEL, THAT MOST INACCESSIBLE OF ALL SEAPORTS...





## Chapter 3. ABANDON SHIP

AND SO IT PROVED. WHEN THE S.S. *TORVILLE* ONCE MORE LEFT ARCHANGEL IT WAS WELL INTO SPRING, ALTHOUGH THE NARROW STRAIT OF GORLO WAS STILL ICEBOUND, NECESSITATING USE OF THE ICE-BREAKER TO GET THE CONVOY OUT. DAVE BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN, AT LAST, THEY EMERGED INTO THE OPEN SEA ...



CAPTAIN CLARKE GLANCED KEENLY AT THE YOUNG SECOND OFFICER, BUT THEY HAD NO CHANCE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER, FOR AT THAT MOMENT ...



BUT AN HOUR LATER ...



WHAT THE DICKENS IS  
THAT CONDOR UP TO ?  
WHY DOESN'T HE ATTACK  
US -- INSTEAD OF JUST  
CIRCLING ROUND LIKE THAT,  
OUT OF RANGE OF  
OUR GUNS ?

HE'S NOT THERE TO  
ATTACK US, SECOND .  
HIS JOB IS TO KEEP THE  
U-BOATS INFORMED OF  
OUR POSITION . WE'LL HAVE  
TROUBLE ENOUGH BEFORE  
LONG, YOU'LL SEE !

AND AS THAT LONG SPRING DAY DREW TO A CLOSE ...



YOU HAVE THE  
LATEST REPORT FROM  
THE CONDOR ?

JA, HERR KAPITAN !  
THE BRITISH CONVOY  
IS THREE MILES TO  
THE EASTWARD OF OUR  
PRESENT POSITION .

ABOARD VESSELS THROUGHOUT THE CONVOY LOOKOUTS WERE ON THE ALERT AS THE BRIEF ARCTIC NIGHT CLOSED IN. BUT CLOUDS SCUDDLED ACROSS THE FACE OF THE MOON, WHITE FEATHERS OF SPRAY STREAKED THE RESTLESS SEA -- AND NONE SAW THE SLENDER PERISCOPE WHICH ROSE FROM THE DEPTHS AHEAD AND PAUSED THERE, LIKE A SNAKE ABOUT TO STRIKE.



CAREFULLY THE U-BOAT COMMANDER MANOEUVRED INTO POSITION ...

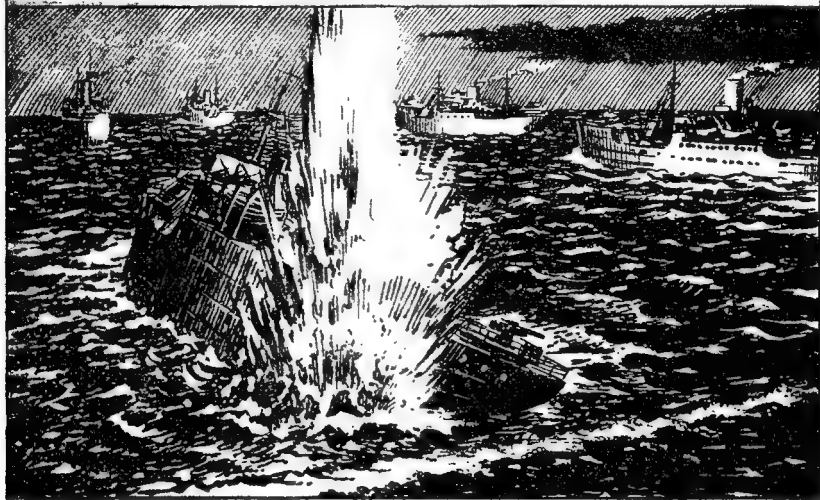


TWO GLISTENING WHITE TRAILS STREAKED THROUGH THE WATER -- STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE TORVILLE ...

HARD A-PORT!  
TORPEDOES!



THE TORPILLE BEGAN TO SWING -- BUT SHE WAS SLOW AND SLUGGISH. A BATTERING RAM THUD SHOOK HER, AND SHE HEAVED CONVULSIVELY AS A RENDING EXPLOSION TORE A GAPING HOLE IN HER STERN.



WALLOWING DRUNKENLY, THE MERCHANT SHIP RIGHTED ITSELF, SHUDDERING VIOLENTLY.



ENGINE ROOM ....  
WHAT'S THE DAMAGE,  
CHIEF ?

SCREWS  
GONE, SKIPPER!  
THERE'S NOTHING  
I CAN DO!

GOOD JOB WE'RE  
CARRYING TIMBER,  
SIR, OR THAT TIN-  
FISH WOULD HAVE  
FINISHED US.

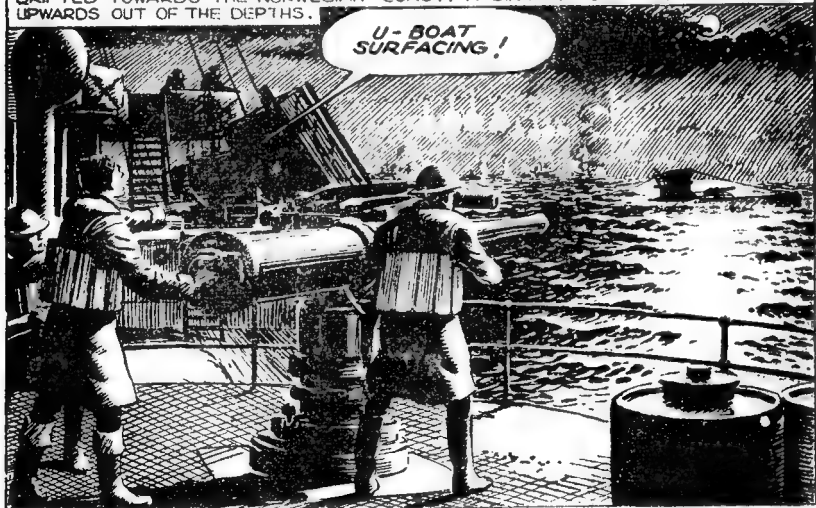
THE SHIP LAY, ROLLING HELPLESSLY IN THE SHORT, STEEP SEAS, HER ENGINES USELESS. A SUDDEN BRILLIANT FLASH STABBED THE DARKNESS AHEAD-- AND THEN THE NIGHT WAS LIT BY THE GLARE OF STAR SHELLS.

WE'LL GET NO HELP FROM THAT DIRECTION YET AWHILE. THERE'S MORE THAN ONE U-BOAT ATTACKING THE CONVOY-- AND THE ESCORT WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THEM FIRST.



BUT NOT ALL THE U-BOATS HAD FOLLOWED THE CONVOY, AS THE TORVILLE DRIFTED TOWARDS THE NORWEGIAN COAST, A SINISTER BLACK SHAPE NOSED UPWARDS OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

U-BOAT SURFACING!



DAVE'S HAND SPRANG TO THE FIRING LEVER OF THE FOUR-INCH GUN AS HE SHOUTED THE WARNING ...

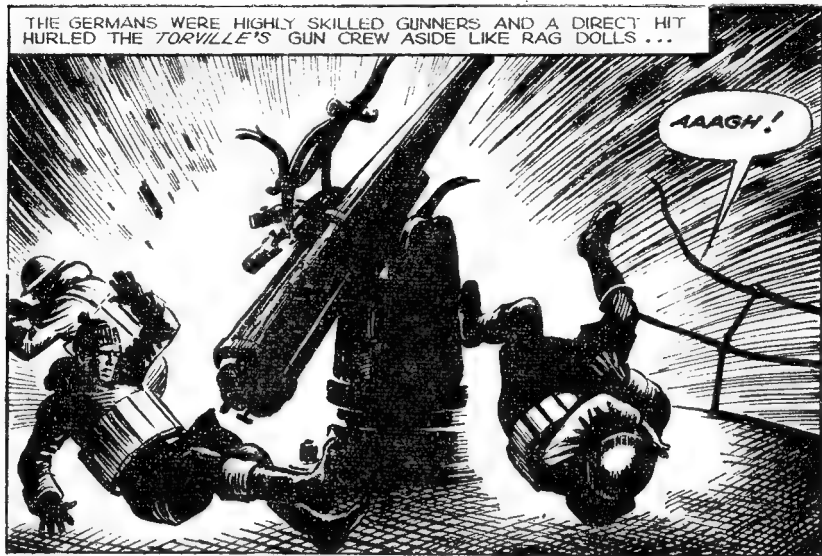


WATER FOUNTAINED BESIDE THE LEAN HULL AND THE ROAR OF THE EXPLODING SHELL MINGLED WITH THAT OF THE U-BOAT'S DECK GUN.





THE GERMANS WERE HIGHLY SKILLED GUNNERS AND A DIRECT HIT HURLED THE TORVILLE'S GUN CREW ASIDE LIKE RAG DOLLS ...



AGAIN THE U-BOAT'S GUN ROARED -- THIS TIME AIMED AT THE BRIDGE. DAZED AND BEWILDERED, DAVE WAS THE FIRST TO STAGGER TO HIS FEET AS TED WESTON RAN ON TO THE SCENE.



MORE SHELLS SMASHED INTO THE DEFENCELESS TORVILLE. SHUDDERING, SHE HEELED SLOWLY OVER TO STARBOARD...

ABANDON  
SHIP! CUT  
THOSE RAFTS  
ADrift!



THE SULLEN ROAR OF THE FLAMES AND THE RENDING SCREAM OF SHATTERING PLATES MADE A TERRIBLE BACKGROUND TO THE MACABRE SCENE.

STEADY, THERE!  
MIND HIS  
LEG!



A SUDDEN VIOLENT LURCH OF THE SHIP TORE THE ROPE OUT OF DAVE'S HANDS AND HE PLUNGED INTO THE ICY WATER. A MOMENT LATER HE WAS BEING HAULED ABOARD THE SPRAY-DRENCHED RAFT BY TED WESTON.



OKAY, DAVE? YOU'RE THE  
LAST SURVIVOR. SKIPPER'S  
ON THE OTHER RAFT.

EVEN AS TED SPOKE, A MACHINE-GUN HAMMERED HARSHLY FROM THE U-BOAT'S CONNING TOWER AND A HAIL OF LEAD SWEEPED THE SECOND RAFT, TOPPLING MEN INTO THE WATER LIKE RAG DOLLS.



DAVE'S WORDS CHOKED IN HIS THROAT AS TED PULLED HIM DOWN, BUT THE MASSACRE OF HELPLESS, UNARMED MEN WHICH HE WITNESSED THAT NIGHT DROVE DEEPER THE BITTER HATRED HE FELT FOR THE WHOLE NAZI RACE.



THE LEAN, SINISTER CRAFT SLID SILENTLY INTO THE DEPTHS --AND THEN BEGAN THE GRIM TASK OF PICKING UP THE PITIFUL HANDFUL OF MEN WHO HAD ESCAPED.



## Chapter 4. FIGHTING MERCHANTMEN

THROUGHOUT THE FEW REMAINING HOURS OF DARKNESS AND FAR INTO THE NEXT MORNING THEY PADDOLED SOUTH, HEADING TOWARDS THE NORTHERN COAST OF NORWAY. AT LAST, ALMOST PARALYSED WITH COLD AND ICY SPRAY, THEIR HANDS TORN AND BLISTERED, THEY DRIFTED INTO THE MOUTH OF A NARROW FIORD.



UNKNOWN TO THE SEAMEN, THEIR ARRIVAL HAD BEEN SEEN FROM AFAR -- BY A GERMAN COASTAL DEFENCE POST...



BUT THERE WAS STILL A POWER OF FIGHT LEFT IN THE *PERUVILLE* SURVIVORS. DAVE WAS THE FIRST TO RECOVER -- AND AS THE GERMANS CAME NEARER, HE LED HIS SHIPMATES IN A FURIOUS CHARGE ...





TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE AND OUTNUMBERED TWO TO ONE, THE GERMANS WERE QUICKLY OVERPOWERED BY THE EIGHT UNINJURED BRITISH SEAMEN.

TIE 'EM WITH THEIR BELTS. THEY WON'T HOLD THEM FOR LONG, BUT THEIR BOAT CAN'T BE FAR AWAY -- THEY MUST HAVE LEFT IT SOMEWHERE HIGHER UP THE FIORD.

YOU WILL NOT GET AWAY WITH THIS, ENGLANDERS! YOU MIGHT JUST AS WELL SURRENDER NOW!

BUT SURRENDER HAD NO PLACE IN THE ENGLISHMEN'S THOUGHTS. THEY FOUND THE BOAT AND LEAVING THE REST OF THEIR PARTY UNDER COVER OF THE TREES, THE SECOND OFFICER AND TWO SEAMEN CREPT SILENTLY DOWN TO THE WATER'S EDGE...

DROP YOUR GUNS -- AND NO TRICKS!



## Those In Peril

AT RIFLE POINT THE TWO SAILORS HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY, AND TWENTY MINUTES LATER, WITH THE INJURED MEN SETTLED COMFORTABLY BELOW DECKS, THE LAUNCH WAS UNDER WAY...



THE GRINNING FACE OF FRED SMYTHE, THE *TORVILLE*'S THIRD ENGINEER, APPEARED IN THE HATCHWAY...

THE TANK'S PRACTICALLY FULL. THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH TO TAKE US RIGHT HOME, BUT WITH CARE WE SHOULD GET A GOOD PART OF THE WAY.



WITH THIS NEWS TO CHEER THEM, THE FIGHTING SURVIVORS HEADED OUT TO SEA.



NERVOUSLY ALERT FOR ANY SIGN OF PURSUIT, THEY PRESSED ON THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THAT DAY. NIGHT CAME AND STILL THEIR LUCK HELD. BUT AS DAWN FLUSHED THE EASTERN SKY ...



TENSELY THEY WATCHED THE APPROACHING SEAPLANE ...



BUT THE GERMAN PILOT WAS NOT SATISFIED ...

SEE, THEY ARE WAVING TO US!

JA -- BUT THE NUMBER ON THEIR BOW IS THAT OF THE LAUNCH CAPTURED BY THE ENGLANDERS! THEY ARE TRYING TO TRICK US -- BUT WE WILL SHOW THEM, EH, FRITZ?

HIS LIPS DRAWN BACK IN A MIRTHLESS SMILE, THE GERMAN PILOT SWUNG BACK TOWARDS THE MOTOR LAUNCH ...

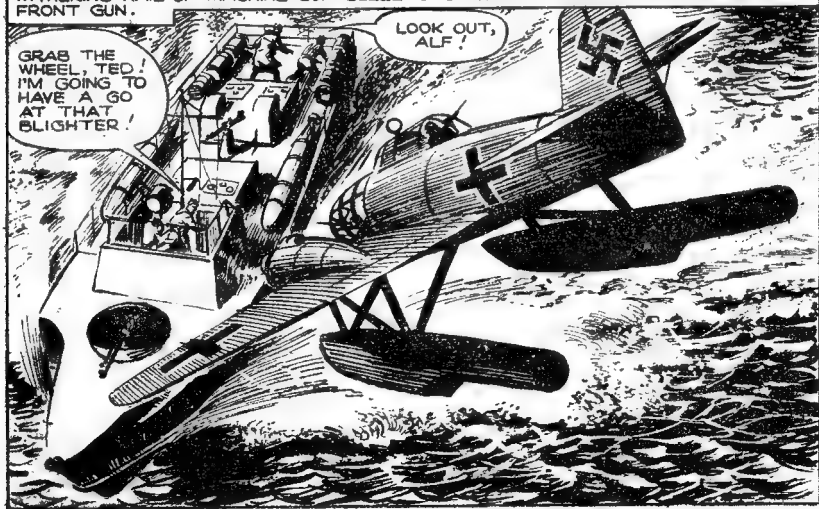
HE'S COMING BACK!

LOOK OUT -- HE'S RUMBLING US!

DAVE SPUN THE WHEEL HARD OVER -- BUT NOT QUICKLY ENOUGH TO AVOID THE WITHERING HAIL OF MACHINE-GUN BULLETS STREAMING FROM THE HEINKEL'S FRONT GUN.

GRAB THE WHEEL, TED! I'M GOING TO HAVE A GO AT THAT BLIGHTER!

LOOK OUT, ALF!



IN SPITE OF HIS LAME LEG, DAVE REACHED THE HEAVY MACHINE-GUN IN HALF A DOZEN SWIFT STRIDES -- AND HE SENT A STREAM OF SHELLS RIPPING INTO THE PLANE'S UNDEFENDED UNDERSIDE.



THE SEAMAN'S WORDS WERE DROWNED IN THE THUNDEROUS ROAR OF THE PLANE'S ENGINES AND THE TEARING CRASH AS THE SEAPLANE STALLED FOR A MOMENT, AND THEN PLUNGED HEADLONG INTO THE SEA.







IT WAS FAR INTO THE AFTERNOON, WITH THE SEA RISING HOURLY AND A HALF GALE BLOWING, BEFORE SPARKS ANNOUNCED THAT THE RADIO TRANSMITTER WAS WORKING.

START SENDING, SPARKS~~ AND KEEP ON REPEATING OUR POSITION UNTIL SOMEBODY GETS HERE!



AND LET'S HOPE IT'S A BRITISH SHIP THAT REACHES US FIRST! I WANT TO GET HOME AND JOIN THE NAVY. THEY'VE GOT TO LET ME IN NOW! THERE ARE TOO MANY DEETS! I OWE THE JERRIES, AND THEY'RE GOING TO BE PAID IN FULL BEFORE THIS WAR'S OVER!

TED WESTON GLANCED AT THE YOUNG SECOND OFFICER, SURPRISED BY THE BITTERNESS OF HIS TONE.

MACHINE-GUNNING THE TORVILLE'S SURVIVORS WAS A ROTTEN TRICK, DAVE.



THAT'S NOT THE ONLY THING, TED. THEY SANK THE CAMDEN IN THE SAME WAY~~ AND SHE HADN'T A GUN TO DEFEND HERSELF. I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO ESCAPED.

TED SAID NO MORE, AND FOR THE NEXT FIVE HOURS THE LAUNCH DROVE ON IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF THE HOMEWARD-BOUND CONVOY. HE AND DAVE TOOK TURNS AT THE WHEEL OF THE TINY VESSEL, PEERING HOPEFULLY INTO THE MURK. AND THEN, AS EVENING ADDED ITS GLOOM TO THE LEADEN SKY ...



THE WISDOM OF TED'S ADVICE WAS EVIDENT TO EVERYONE, AND TENSELY THEY WAITED -- FRED SNYTHE BELOW WITH HIS HAND ON THE THROTTLE, READY TO OPEN UP TO FULL SPEED THE INSTANT WORD WAS GIVEN. BUT AS THE DESTROYER CAME CLOSER ...



THE REST OF THE VOYAGE HOME PROVED UNEVENTFUL, AND ONCE THERE DAVE LOST NO TIME IN RE-APPLYING FOR ENLISTMENT IN THE ROYAL NAVY -- IN SPITE OF TED'S WARNINGS THAT IT WOULD DO NO GOOD ...



## Chapter 5. GAUNTLET TO MALTA

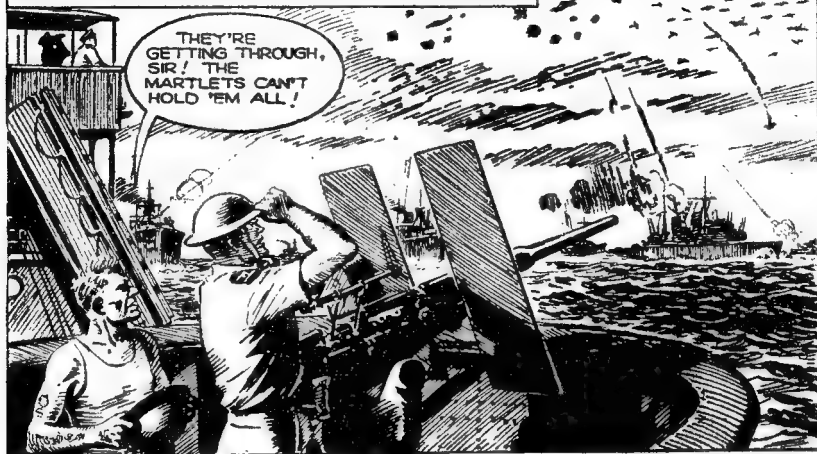
THE CONVOY SAILED SERENELY ACROSS THE BAY OF BISCAY UNCHALLENGED BY THE ENEMY. IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, IT WAS JOINED BY A SMALL ESCORT CARRIER AND TWO HEAVY CRUISERS.



AND SO IT PROVED. THE FIRST ALARM CAME AS THEY WERE NEARING THE STRAITS OF PANTELLARIA...



BRILLIANT ORANGE FLASHES AND PUFFS OF BLACK SMOKE TO PORT MARKED THE PATH OF THE BOMBERS AS SHIPS OF THE ESCORT OPENED FIRE. DAVE LIMPED DOWN TO HIS POSITION AT THE FORWARD OERLIKON.



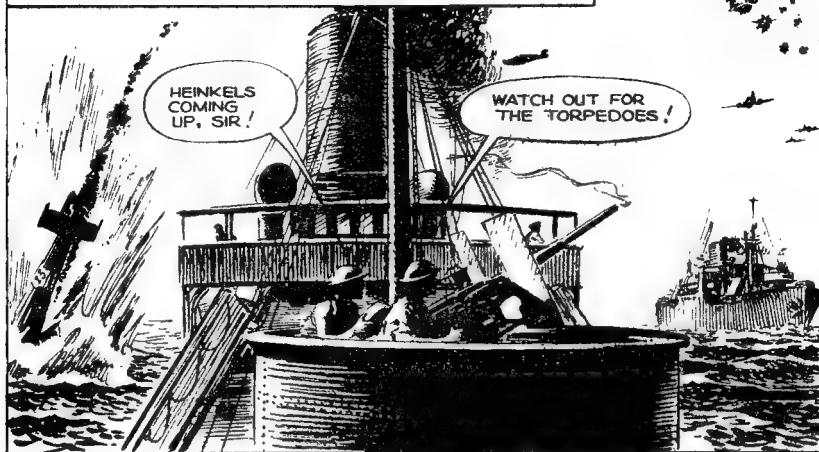
THE SCREAM OF FALLING BOMBS FILLED THE AIR. MINGLED WITH IT CAME THE HAMMERING OF MACHINE-GUNS AND CANNONS AND THE HEAVIER THUMP OF THE WARSHIPS' GUNS.



A STICK OF BOMBS STRADDLED THE *DAWNSTAR* AND A GREAT GEYSER OF WATER LASHED THE DECKS, BUT ALL THE TIME A STREAM OF RED TRACER LEAPT FROM THE SHUDDERING BARREL OF DAVE'S OERLIKON, BITING DEEP INTO THE BOMBER'S FUSELAGE ...



IT STILL SEEMED TO BE UNDER CONTROL BUT SMOOTHLY AND ALMOST LEISURELY, THE PLANE TURNED ON ITS BACK AND PLUNGED INTO THE SEA, THE RISING THUNDER OF ITS ENGINES SUDDENLY SILENCED FOR EVER.



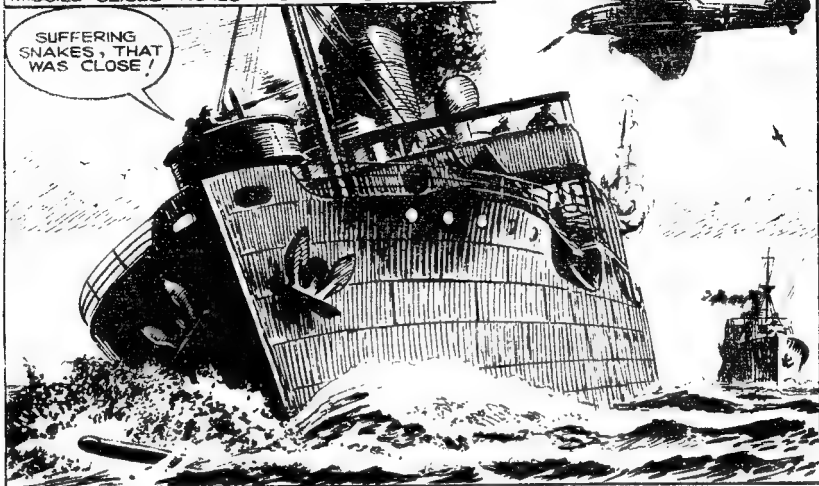
ONE GERMAN BOMBER BURST THROUGH THE CURTAIN OF A.A. FIRE FROM THE DESTROYERS AND DAVE DISTINCTLY SAW THE SPLASH AS IT DROPPED ITS TORPEDO.



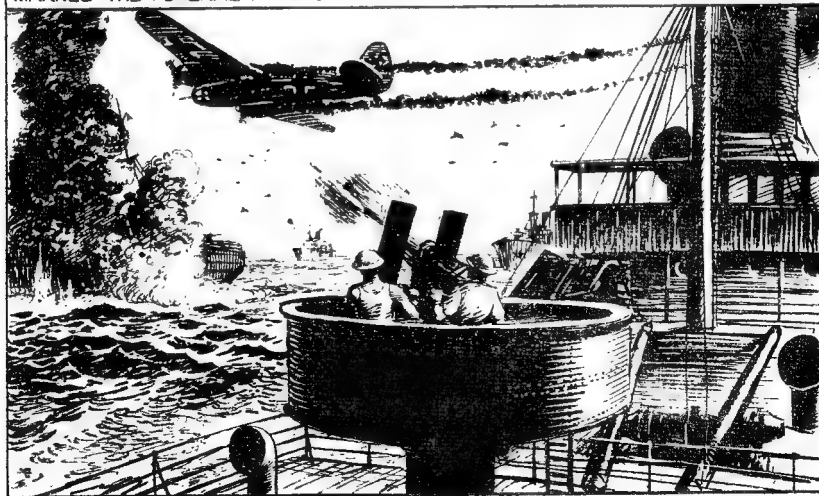


A SLIM WHITE TRAIL ARROWED TOWARDS THE *DAWNSTAR*—FRANTICALLY, THE HELMSMAN SPUN THE WHEEL HARD OVER—AND THE DEADLY MISSILE SLICED INCHES PAST THE BOWS.

SUFFERING  
SNAKES, THAT  
WAS CLOSE!



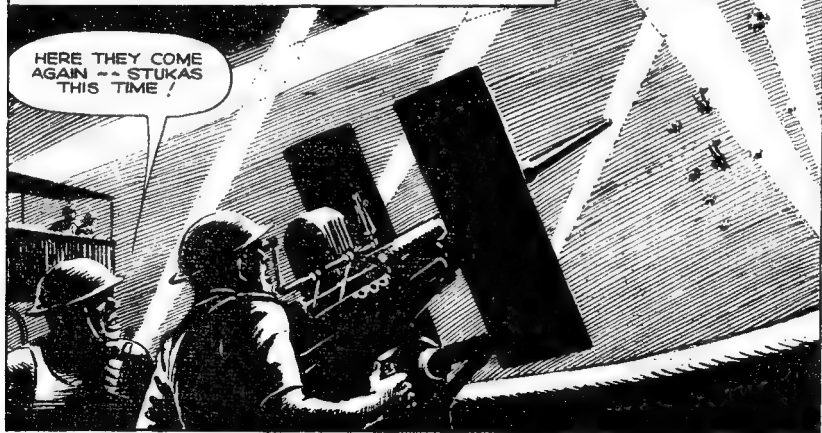
THE HEINKEL SWEEPED LOW OVERHEAD, RAKED FROM NOSE TO TAIL BY CANNON FIRE, BUT ITS TORPEDO HAD FOUND A TARGET. A BRIGHT ORANGE GLARE MARKED THE FUNERAL PYRE OF ONE OF THE CONVOY'S SEVEN MERCHANTMEN...



THEN THE FLEET AIR ARM MARTLETS SWOOPED ON THE ATTACKERS AND A HEINKEL SPUN DOWN NEAR THE FRINGE OF THE CONVOY. BUT TWO SHIPS WERE ABLAZE AND A CORVETTE WAS LISTING HEAVILY.



FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY, DAVE SCARCELY LEFT HIS POSITION AT THE OERLIKON. WAVE AFTER WAVE OF GERMAN AND ITALIAN BOMBERS AND TORPEDO BOMBERS ATTACKED THE CONVOY, AND THEN, TOWARDS NIGHTFALL, THERE WAS AN UNEASY LULL ... BUT IT DID NOT LAST ...



THE NEXT HALF HOUR WAS ONE DAVE WOULD NEVER FORGET. THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE GRIE Scream OF DIVING PLANES AND THE OMINOUS WHISTLE OF BOMBS. TIME AND AGAIN, GUSHING FOUNTAINS OF WATER FROM NEAR MISSES DRENCHED THE DECKS WITH SPRAY. WEARILY HE LINED UP HIS SIGHTS ON A STUKA HURLING STRAIGHT FOR THE *DAWYSTAR*..



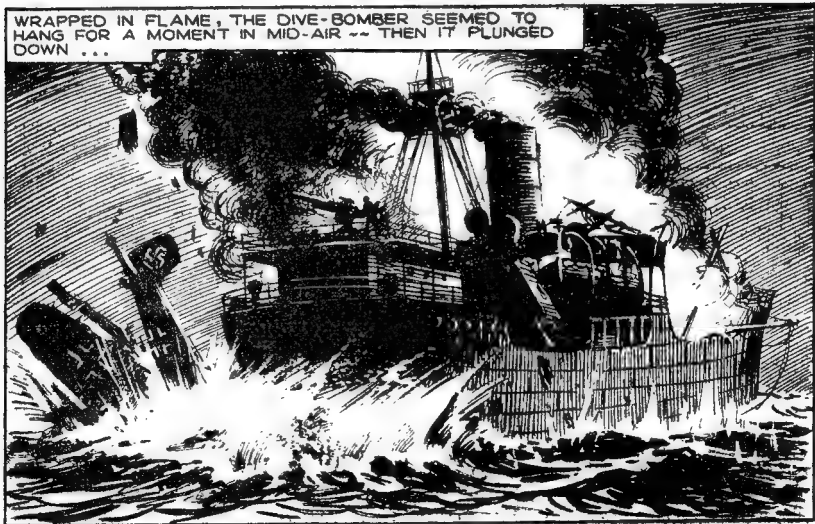
CANNON SHELLS TORE INTO THE STUKA, BUT NOTHING SEEMED ABLE TO STOP THAT TERRIFYING DIVE -- THE BOMB WAS ALREADY FALLING...



THE BOMB STRUCK JUST AFT OF THE BRIDGE AND THE SHIP STAGGERED UNDER THE TREMENDOUS IMPACT. AT THE SAME MOMENT, THE STUKA EXPLODED INTO A WHITE-HOT BALL OF FIRE, DIRECTLY OVERHEAD. THE DIN WAS APPALLING,...



WRAPPED IN FLAME, THE DIVE-BOMBER SEEMED TO HANG FOR A MOMENT IN MID-AIR -- THEN IT PLUNGED DOWN ...



THE SHIP LURCHED AGAIN AS THE PLANE HIT THE WATER JUST ASTERN OF HER, AND THEN SHE BEGAN TO SWING, OUT OF CONTROL. DAVE LEAPED FROM THE OERLIKON AND RACED TO THE BRIDGE LADDER.



LOOK AFTER THE GUN, ALF.

FOR A MOMENT HE PAUSED, HORROR-STRIKEN AT WHAT HE SAW. THE *DAWNSTAR*'S SKIPPER, CAPTAIN MATHIESON, LAY SENSELESS, WHILE TED WESTON HAD BEEN BADLY INJURED. HE RAISED A FEEBLE SMILE AS DAVE APPROACHED, AND PAINFULLY WHISPERED A FEW WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT...



SHE'S - ALL YOURS - NOW, DAVE. AND REMEMBER - SHE MUST - GET THROUGH!

DON'T YOU WORRY, TED. WE'LL GET HER INTO MALTA ~ SOMHOW!

AS THE INJURED WERE CARRIED BELOW, NIGHT CLOSED SWIFTLY ON THE SCENE, CLOAKING THE *DAWNSTAR* IN A WELCOME PALL OF DARKNESS, AND A MOMENT LATER THE VOICE OF ANDY MACLEAN, THE THIRD MATE, CAME THROUGH THE VOICE PIPE ....



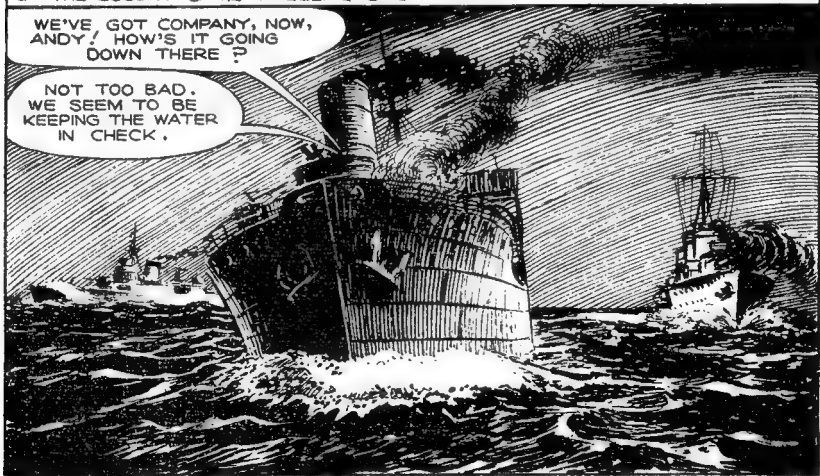
STEERING'S GONE, DAVE. RUDDER WAS CARRIED AWAY WHEN THE STUKA CRASHED. WE'RE TAKING IN WATER PRETTY BADLY, TOO.

HOW ABOUT THE ENGINES?

MIRACULOUSLY, THE SCREWS WERE UNTOUCHED AND THE ENGINES WORKED NORMALLY.



BY SKILFUL USE OF THE TWIN ENGINES, DAVE MANAGED TO KEEP THE *DAWVSTAR* MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, BUT SHE WAS DOWN BY THE STERN AND COULD NOT KEEP STATION ON THE REST OF THE CONVOY. HER DISTRESS HAD BEEN NOTICED, HOWEVER, AND A FRIGATE AND DESTROYER OF THE ESCORT CAME WHEELING BACK.



GRADUALLY, WITH THE PUMPS WORKING AT FULL PRESSURE, THE WATER FLOODING INTO THE SHIP'S AFTER HOLD WAS BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. DAVE REMAINED ON THE BRIDGE, SCANNING THE RESTLESS SEA. BUT TROUBLE DID NOT COME UNTIL SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT, WHEN THE TWO WARSHIPS BROKE FORMATION AND WHEELED AWAY TO STARBOARD, THEIR SEARCHLIGHTS STABBING THE DARKNESS.



DAVE WAS RIGHT. THE DESTROYER HAD CONTACTED A GROUP OF SIX E-BOATS TRYING TO SNEAK UP UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, AND FOR THE NEXT HALF HOUR THE TWO MERCHANT NAVY OFFICERS HAD A GRANDSTAND VIEW OF THE BATTLE WHICH FOLLOWED -- A VIEW THAT BITTERLY REMINDED DAVE OF HIS OWN DESIRE TO HIT AT THE ENEMY.





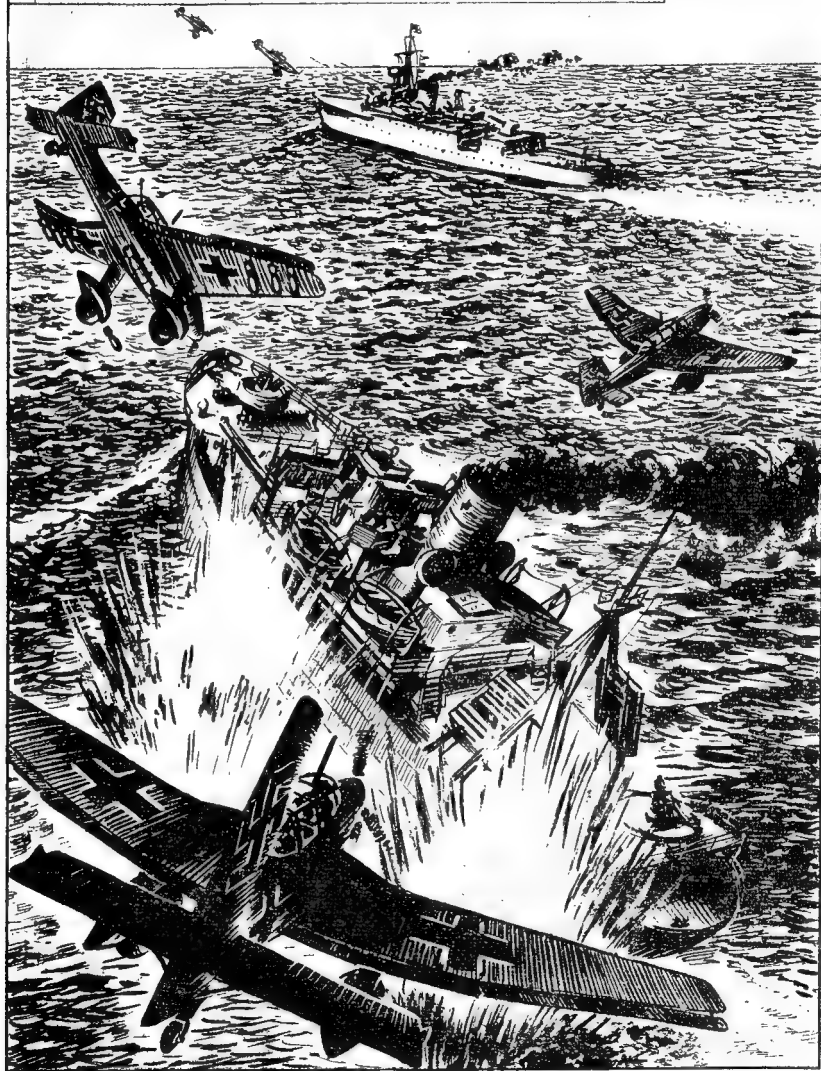
SOON, THE THREE REMAINING E-BOATS TURNED TAIL AND STREAKED FOR HOME. THE FLICKERING LINES OF TRACER AND THE SEARCHLIGHTS DIED AWAY -- THE BATTLE WAS OVER.



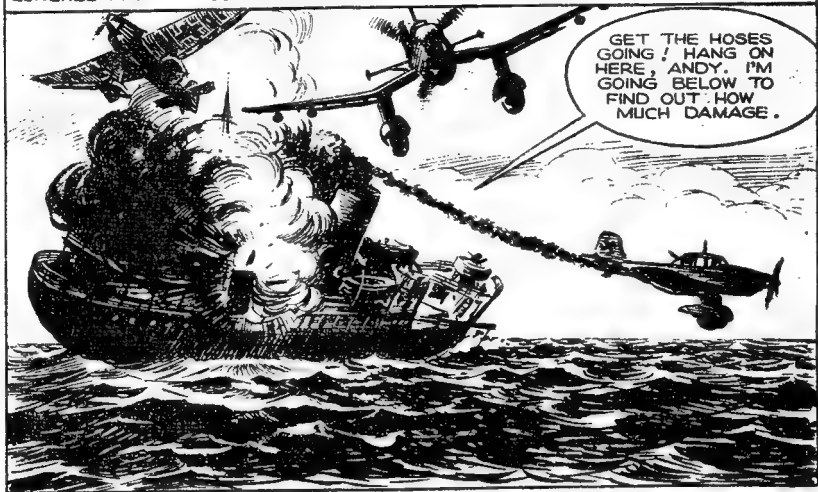
THE REST OF THE NIGHT PASSED QUIETLY ENOUGH, BUT WITH THE DAWN CAME THE FIRST OF THE DIVE BOMBERS, SWOOPING DOWN LIKE VULTURES ON THE CRIPPLED STRAGGLER OF THE CONVOY.



THERE WAS NO TIME FOR DAVE TO REPLY. ALREADY HIS TWIN VICKERS WERE BANGING AWAY AT A PLUMMETING STUKA ...



TRAILING BLACK OILY SMOKE BEHIND IT, THE LAST OF THE THREE STUKAS LURCHED AWAY -- BUT ITS BOMB HAD HIT THE *DAWNSTAR*.



FIRE'S IN THE UPPER 'TWEEN DECKS, SIR. BUT IT'S WELL CLEAR OF THE AMMUNITION AND PETROL.

OKAY! LET'S GET THESE HOSES TO WORK.



WITHIN MINUTES, TWO HOSES WERE PUMPING WATER OVER THE BLAZE. ANDY HAD TO YELL TO MAKE HIS VOICE HEARD ABOVE THE SULEN ROAR OF THE FLAMES AND THE HISS OF STEAM.

SIGNAL FROM THE DESTROYER, DAVE. SHE WANTS TO KNOW IF WE'RE GOING TO ABANDON SHIP.

TELL HER 'NO'. WE'LL MAKE IT TO MALTA...



EVEN AS DAVE SPOKE, A NEW SOUND ECHOED THINLY FROM ABOVE AND A SEAMAN CAME RACING EXCITEDLY DOWN THE COMPANIONWAY...



CHIEFED BY THE NEWS, DAVE AND HIS MEN REDOUBLED THEIR EFFORTS. BY EARLY AFTERNOON THE FIRES WERE OUT AND THE *DAWNSTAR*, WITH WARSHIPS ON EITHER FLANK AND A FLIGHT OF SPITFIRES CIRCLING OVERHEAD, WAS STEAMING INTO GRAND HARBOUR, MALTA.

JUST LOOK AT THE PEOPLE ON THE BASTIONS, DAVE! THEY'RE GIVING US A RIGHT ROYAL WELCOME!



AS THE *DAWNSTAR*, IN CHARGE OF A TUG, DREW INTO THE DOCK, THE SOUND OF CHEERING ECHOED ACROSS THE WATER. LOOKING UP AT THE WAVING THROUG, DAVE CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF A FAMILIAR FIGURE IN NAVAL UNIFORM. **IT WAS HIS BROTHER, ALEC...**



ALEC GRINNED RUEFULLY AT THIS QUESTION...

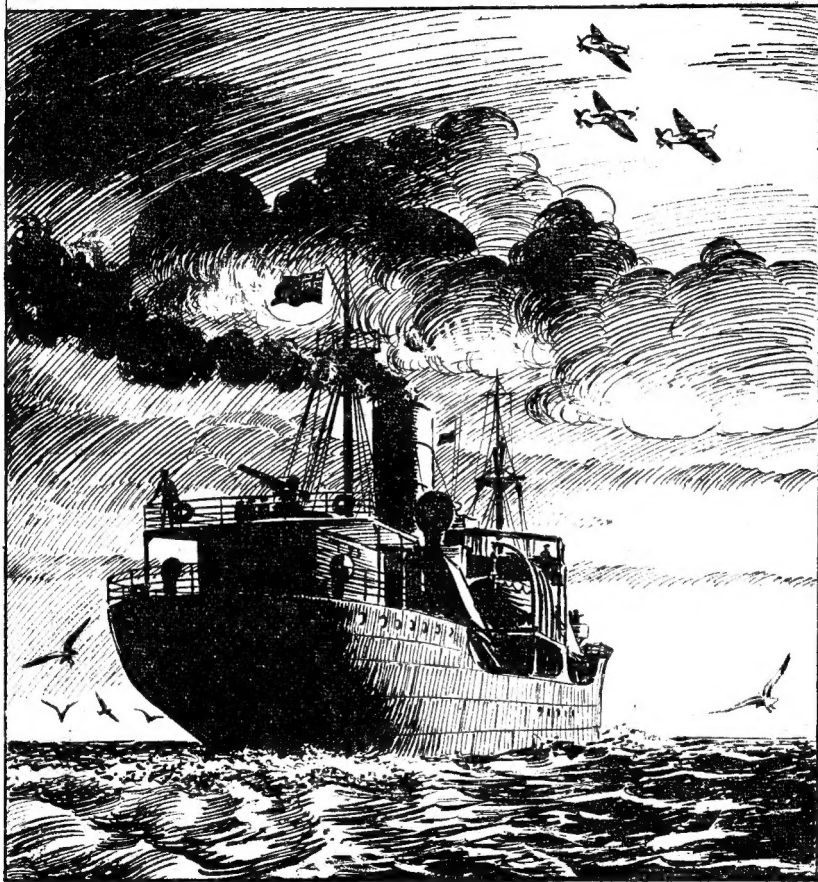
BECAUSE MY PLANE'S OUT OF ACTION -- LIKE HALF THE SQUADRON -- FOR WANT OF SPARES TO REPAIR THEM. I CAN TELL YOU, DAVE, MALTA WOULD HAVE BEEN IN QUEER STREET IF YOU AND THOSE OTHER THREE SHIPS HADN'T GOT THROUGH. THERE'S HARDLY ANY FOOD LEFT ON THE ISLAND... THAT'S WHY THE PEOPLE ARE CHEERING -- THEY'VE BEEN ON STARVATION RATIONS FOR WEEKS.

THERE, YOU SEE, DAVE. WITHOUT THE MERCHANT NAVY THIS WAR COULD HAVE ONLY ONE END.

ALL RIGHT, TED, I'M CONVINCED! YOU WON'T HEAR ME GRUMBLE AGAIN -- JUST SO LONG AS WE CAN GET OUR CARGOES SAFELY INTO HARBOUR.



TWO DAYS LATER, S.S. *DAWNSTAR* SAILED FROM BESIEGED MALTA. HER HOLDS WERE EMPTY, THOSE VITAL SUPPLIES SHE HAD CARRIED ALREADY BEING USED TO KEEP THE GALLANT ISLAND ALIVE AND FIGHTING. ON THE PATCHED AND BATTERED BRIDGE OF THE CARGO SHIP STOOD HER ACTING SKIPPER, DAVE KENDALL, HIS MIND CONTENT AT LAST WITH THE PART HE WAS FATED TO PLAY IN THE GREAT CONFLICT.



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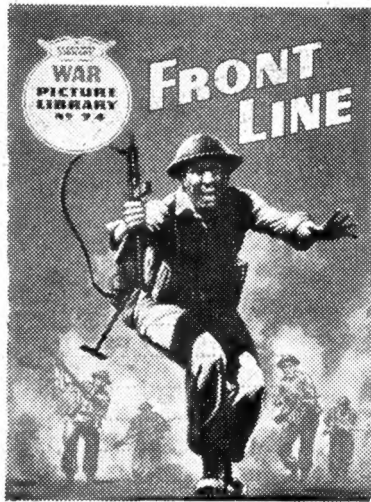
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